

# Dramatic Publishing

## The Kingdom of Grimm

### Hints, tips and tricks

A boy enters a forest. He finds a key. Then he finds a trunk. He unlocks the trunk and a troupe of players climb out. They perform three stories for him. And then they are on their way, taking the trunk with them, but leaving a few lessons. Sounds simple, right? And so it is. But, invariably, questions will arise.

How do you get all those players to fit into the trunk? Isn't it cramped in there? Or are they really tiny?

When *The Kingdom of Grimm* was first produced by Chicago Playworks, we solved this problem by performing the show in a theatre with a trap door in the floor of the stage. This allowed the players to wait underneath the action until they actually emerged. The trunk itself was built without a bottom, and the last player to climb out of it closed the trap door after himself, so that when the traveling case was finally hoisted into the air, the stage floor appeared to be solid. For those theatres without a trap door, you might consider placing the trunk next to a piece of scenery such as a backdrop or a series of trees. The players can then wait behind this and make their way through a hole in the side of trunk before they come out of the top.

Who are these players that perform so many different roles in so many different stories? What personalities should they take on when they are supposed to be themselves?

We found it best to tell our actors and actresses to be themselves, or extensions of themselves. Of course, entirely new personalities can be created, too. But it is always a good idea to start with who you are and then go from there.

Should all the props and costumes also come out of the trunk?

Yes, if at all possible. This might mean that a stagehand is underneath the trunk or behind it feeding certain articles through to the actors. Of course, some pieces, such as the costuming for the dragon, may be too big to fit through the box. In that case, it might be resting behind a backdrop or tree and the actors should make it seem like it came out with the initial bunch of clothes.

Should the players remain on stage and in sight for the entire show?

Again, yes, if at all possible. They are their own audience. They are acting for each other, as well as Hans. Occasionally, someone might nip behind a section of the scenery to change into a costume or make a surprise entrance. But, in general, they should be there for the duration.

How much improvisation should the actors and actresses playing these players allow themselves?

Very little, and I'm not just saying this because I wrote the thing. The script is written in a loose and improvisational style, and the temptation, especially with younger actors, will be to embellish. Don't let them. The more dialogue that is added on to the text, the longer the show will run. To keep it moving at a steady clip, the actors should stick with the script.

Ultimately, what should the show feel like to an audience?

A day at the circus. Or at least 75 minutes of such frivolity. Now go have fun.

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